824 considered as the founding ancestor transformed into a tree. The old men of the village come to the tree each year, leaning their backs [844] against its trunk, while the placentae of newly delivered women are hung on it (1).

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1. The balanza groves around the Bambara settlements have attracted the attention of botanists. M. G. Roberty, in Les Associations végétales de la vallée moyenne du Niger /The Vegetable Associations of the Middle Nigerian Valley/, has studied their agricultural rôle: "The Dumosaeptum arboreitoides, cultivation under the balanzas. Artificial, well defined landscape. Trees losing their leaves during the rainy season, regaining them during the dry season, thorny, regularly spaced, but planted in the distant past. The Acacia albida loses its leaves in June and grows them again in December, thus furnishing shade in the dry season and humus in the rainy season. The Dumosaeptum owes it its permanent villages.... The date of the introduction of this very useful tree into the western Sudan remains shrouded in mystery, as is the time and method of its dissemination over cultivated fields. It is probable that the Acacia albida comes from eastern Africa, somewhere south of the equator. How did it come as far as the Bambara country without losing its original seasonal cycle? What sultan, or what agronomer of genius forced its multiplication around the Bambara villages? These questions remain, for the time being, without answers. The tales of the first European conquerors seem to have proved that numerous "tatas," the enormous citadels of red mud, were enclosed by living balanzas fences with joined trunks... It is probable that their military use has preceeded everywhere their agricultural use... We have very little information concerning

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2. Grouped hierarchally, children, male adults, and women form religious societies or institutions, dyo. Each dyo is charged with the upkeep of altars which serve to preserve the spiritual forces of the group. (See p.

the dying man to go into the water and place itself under Faro's protection. At the moment of delivery, both ni and dya return to the body of the newborn child who replaces the dead man, but they return in reversed order: the dya is returned to the body of the child and becomes his ni; the ni of the deceased mixes with the birth water spread on the ground which forms the shadow (suma) and will be his double, the twin (1). In the case of a boy, the dya will be female; in the

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1. The blood of childbirth represents the excess tomato juice absorbed by the woman, that which remains in the womb after the formation of the embryo. On the eighth day after birth, the mother of the parturient woman squeezes three or four tomatoes (depending on the sex of the newborn) into a gourd which she then gives to the child's father. The latter makes his wife drink the juice to replace the blood which she has lost and which is considered impure.

case /59/ of a girl, it will be male. These movements are independent of the sex of the deceased as the spirit reverses the sexes when necessary. Each human being is thus both male and female [828] through his soul and his double. This conception of human nature, which is fundamental to the Bambara, is expressed in the symbolism of numbers. [801] The number seven is formed of three (male sexual symbol) and four (female sexual symbol) and represents the complete man. In addition, on another level, the number six is that of male twins, seven that of mixed twins (and the hermaphrodite), and eight that of female twins. The body of the newborn child is gently tapped [844] by the number of strokes representing the above figures in order to call the child's ni according to its sex.

761 funeral rites. There it joins the ancestral forces, the aggregate of which forms a whole whose power is used by the descendants during the seasonal rituals for beneficial purposes.

764 761 The body is buried; it "belongs to the termites" and in the end only the bones will remain and be honored as a testimony of the physical life. Sometimes they are removed from the tomb, examined, and prayed to before being replaced.

761 844 When a birth occurs in the family the newborn child, having inherited the ni and the dya of the deceased, receives his nyama preserved in the pembele and his given name, toko; thus one being replaces another, using the same forces which are used over again and again. Life transmits itself intact. Not only is it undiminished by death, but the dya's sojourn in Faro's residence is thought to be a "reviving," a desirable and beneficial purification. Similarly, the passing of the ni onto the family altars brings about a rejuvenation.

761 On the altars and in the tombs, the "exuviae and bones counted and classified by Faro," are a valid testimony for eternity and serve to maintain the integrity of the whole world of living and dead until the final resurrection.

Attributes of the Person

The Name

551 The organization of the total family /famille indivise/ of the Bambara has already been the object of descriptive works (1). It is

1. In particular Ch. Monteil, Les Empires du Mali; H. Labouret, Les Manding et leur langue /The Malinke and their Language/.

however, appropriate to mention it since certain elements such as family names, devices, taboos, and kinship relationships described as "joking" are related to the components of the person.

Socially, the person is first placed by his given name, toko, that of the ancestor who gave him his ni and his dya, or any other in the paternal or maternal line. The given name indicates the relation to a family group as well as /74/ the person's individuality. It is accompanied by the father's family name (dyamu), whose origin and

291 him and joke with him, indicating by semi-ritual jokes his accession to a new status.

291 773 Men's first garment was the skirt of nyama fibers (Fig. 8, A). The bark was beaten and prepared by means of a club, a wooden club, gosilande or kuruninde, which is /106/ supposed "to contain potentially all human technology invented as the need arose." It is said of this club that it is "the mold of perfection and the place from which all useful things issue." The club was also originally a primitive instrument of rhythm (1); the hammering of blows "chased away the evil

[783] 1. kow dyele bwo yoro. On certain occasion when the Komo masks are brought out, the chief carries on his head the gosilande which represents the universe. Certain collective purifications are also executed with this instrument at the crossroads (see p. 186).

[755] sounds emitted by Téliko at the time of his revolt." Even today, a deafmute is seated near the gosilande which is prayed to so that he may be rid of his infirmity. The clothing of a woman in labor, in [844] order to purify it, is beaten with the gosilande at the same time the infant utters its first cry. Dyed clothing is beaten not only to make the color penetrate, but also to chase out any impurity.

When they first learned about cotton, and after the invention of weaving, the Bambara made garments which are in disuse today but of which they still make specimens for ritual purposes. In fact, with the exception of the loincloth, these ancient garments are worn only during religious ceremonies and their principal function is to represent the ancestors who were their progenitors.

291 773 386 The first garment woven was an imitation of the fiber skirt. The men made loincloth (mboko nimba) still worn today by the uncircumcised and dyed it yellow, wolo (2) (Fig. 8, B), a color which

[824] 2. This dye is made with the leaves of the ngalama (Angeissus leiocarpus), which are boiled, dried, and pulverized. The powder is put in water.

represents that which a certain disease gives to the black's skin,

291 773 822 801 The nyeba, "big eye," or koloso tyema, "mixed masculinity" (with femininity), (Pl. III, a, 11) also represents creation, here symbolized by the double layer of five indigo and white bands (1). At

1. On the value of number 5, see pp. 24, 25.

the same time the cloth also symbolizes the complete man, said to be both masculine and feminine. A newborn child, but never an illegitimate one, is clothed in it.

291 773 The band soli (Pl. III, a, 5) represents the good conduct of Mousso Koroni at the beginning of her life as well as her betrayal which brought disorder on earth.

531 [764] In olden times, people who had committed bad deeds were obliged to wear it. Today it is used as the shroud for a child who dies immediately after birth; a strip is sewn to the garment of a recently excised girl or to the loincloth of a woman insured in childbirth. When differences or conflicts arise within a family, a fragment is placed in amulets which the women must then wear.

[828] The wutu nyekorotike (Pl. III, a, 6) pictures the disorderly voyage of Mousso Koroni, her despair and her madness. This pattern is reserved for insane people in order to warn others of their condition.

The band gombo (Pl. III, a, 7) recalls the pursuit of Mousso /112/ Koroni by the god Pemba into the depths of the sky and the earth.

The band tyatyeli (Pl. III, a, 8) a picture of Mousso Koroni's defeat, symbolizes human work. It is given to a courageous and energetic woman. It is circulated among those present at religious ceremonies and its mere presence indicates that nothing here below is obtained without work and that all stems from work. To wear this band strengthens the man who is entering upon a task in a village other than his own.

The band saki is the koblenkaba, "red sky." It symbolizes heat, anger, difficulties, and sorrows. It is woven at the time of marriage negotiations for the purpose of resolving any differences of opinion.

[844] A piece of it is dipped into the blood after birth and then thrown away in order to purify everything.

[822] The blue stripes of dyitala represent impurity, and the red stripes, purification by sacrifice. Whoever has broken a taboo wears the blue, and the red when he is purified. A piece of red cloth may be inserted into the vagina of a young woman, after she has lost her virginity or

771 considered, follows the chronological order used by this power in the beginning. Similarly, the various skies where Faro reigns are invoked according to their role and the aims of the petitioners /177/ who appeal to them in many cases with very long prayers.

In order not to overload this discussion, a very limited number of rites are described below. Among them, an important place is reserved for those concerning the person (see Ch. 3), which relate to birth, circumcision and excision, funeral rites, and the cult of ancestors. For each one of these the respective positions of the elements composing the individuality at different times have been pointed out.

The rites relating to the ordinary which come next, affect the collective life of the family and village. They concern the residences, the crossroads, and the public squares. They have a very definite character of a gathering together and redistribution of individual forces for the good of the community.

The rain rituals, also collective, which involve the Komo and the Kworè, present a typical example of Bambara symbolism.

Finally, the rituals for "the renewal of the year" have still a more general character: they show close ties uniting individual and community to the cosmos (1).

1. The agricultural rites have not been touched upon in this work as they will be the object of a detailed description in: S. de Ganay, Techniques et rites de l'agriculture chez les Bambara (to be published).

In addition, most of the rituals are duplicated by a series of games of a cosmogonic character which relate to the stages of creation and to its past, present, or future states. See p. 54.

I. Rites Concerning the Person

Birth and Name-Giving

844 273 271 From the moment of his birth, a newborn is washed with millet beer mixed with water. The beer has a purifying quality and the

844 273 271 contact with water which symbolizes "the victory of Faro over Mousso Koroni in the matter of family names" is a prefiguration of name-giving.

851 As soon as the patriarch hears of the birth, he comes and shakes the family pembele over the child's head, three or four times according to the sex, in order to pass on to him the nyama and the qualities of the deceased person from whom he has inherited the ni and the dya. Then, he brings the family altar kere la boli ni into the house of the woman who has just given birth and places it before him. Crouching upon the ground, with fingers spread over the object, he pronounces the following prayer: "You, boli, make me a chief, so that my family prospers, a child is /178/ born, his soul is entrusted to you; I invoke you, boli, night and day" (1).

1. Boli tigi i ka masaya kanu ñe, de wolo la, a ni kalifa be i la, ngo boli ßu ani kle.

Holding the child on his knees, he places the object on its chest for three consecutive times. Repeating the prayer, he next cuts the throat of a red rooster over the open sac, dips the right index into the blood, and, depending upon whether it is a boy or a girl, makes three or four crosses on the forehead of the newborn who thus becomes the "son of the boli," boli dɛ̃.

A white sea shell, krokrodya (2), is placed before the newborn

2. Cardita vingens.

and gently moved about to "condense his dya within him." Then it is tied to the child's foot for three or four days according to its sex.

846 824 751 At the same time, the mother who is entrusted with the child's dya until the name-giving ritual, adorns herself during the eight days following the birth with a collar (madya, "dya of the person") made from the odoriferous root of the tree bearing the same name. She will wear it until the child takes its first steps so as to protect it and to recall that she herself carried the soul of the newborn.

553 852 The name is given on the eighth day by the chief of the Komo. Under the dubale, a tree which shelters the village meetings, the elders assemble around the Komo altars which have been carried to the spot (3). If it is a first son, the father gives one hundred kola nuts,

771 In any case, these are questions which he does not ask or which, at least, he has not considered in any way that would cause him to make logical, even if fragmentary, syntheses. His words and his acts are indications and sometimes even guide-posts for us, but how uncertain and misleading they can be! And, in the observation of current facts, how many at least seeming contradictions there are! However, in the main, the analysis given in the paragraphs above represents the basis of Bambara dogma, since everything happens in reality as if the Bambara were living in accordance with these principles.

761 That being the case, life results from the union of the two parts of the body, while death is a result of their separation. 772 Whence come these two elements and who it is that decides upon their union? No answer is possible. The Bambara say, merely, that certain persons are reincarnations. Precautions [844] taken during pregnancy and delivery show that childbirth is one of those mysteries against which taboos must be observed as a protection. The frequent and readily believed stories about [845] women giving birth to monsters -- usually animals -- bear witness to the affinities which, in the minds of the Bambara, exist between all creatures. But nothing specific is said about what precedes and determines the birth of a child.

562 This is a secret to which the Bambara are, of course, 778 not indifferent. It is evidenced in the fact that women, through whom man comes into the world, are held to be doubtful creatures, at the very least, partly because of menstruation, which makes a woman impure, and partly because of the mysterious travail she endures during the delivery of a child (1).

[774]

1. Women are also susceptible of being possessed continuously by a spirit (see the story of the Déni-bo Ba, p. 123). That is why, when a woman is several times widowed, she is suspected of being possessed by a jealous spirit who kills off her husbands. She is often even thought to be herself a sorceress.

843 A Bambara has no very exact idea of the duration of pregnancy. His deductions, based on appearances alone, lead him to believe that a child born completely formed must have been in the mother's womb longer than one less well-formed. [845] Besides, it is believed that conception may be due to some spirit who had relations with the woman (1). Children born with some

1. See above, in the chronicle of Kaarta, the tale about Deni-ba Bo, who had relations with a mabo woman who claimed a connection with a spirit in the form of a horse.

strange or abnormal characteristics are thought to be the result of such affairs, and the fact that some women give birth only to stillborn infants is attributed to the same cause.

The pregnant woman is advised to go about her domestic chores up to the very moment of [210] her confinement and, in particular, to continue to grind grain, no doubt to facilitate labor, especially for those who are mothers for the first time.

844 When the labor pains begin, the woman retires to her hut, accompanied by matrons famed for their experience in these matters. Men, including the husband, may not come near the patient.

845 If there is a breach presentation or any other complication, the women do what they can, based on their personal experience, the inspiration of the moment, or the current superstitions. As a last resort they call in the magician or the marabout, which amounts to the same thing. Neither one is allowed to see the patient, but must work from the outside, using magic passes, incantations, or prayers and prescribing suitable remedies.

844 To deliver the baby, the mother ordinarily squats with her hands behind her head or kneels with her hands against the wall. The eldest or most skillful of the attending matrons ties the umbilical cord and then cuts it. This operation is often badly done and causes the umbilical hernia with which so many natives are afflicted and which is regarded, indeed, as a deformation in

844 good taste. The placenta is buried outdoors near the hut or sometimes in the floor of the hut itself. The mother is washed and often given an infusion to drink which is alleged to stop bleeding.

The baby is washed several times and then anointed with vegetable fat (1) (se tlu) or butter made from cow's milk. Its

1. Known to Europeans as karite, originally a Soninké word.

head is massaged to give it a nice shape, and then the baby is wrapped in a white cloth.

The child is usually not fed for the first 24 hours, although it is sometimes given a few drops of goat's milk, a beverage with mystical qualities. It is then given the breast.

851 At the earliest possible moment the father must be informed of the birth and sex of the child. Indeed, he is brought in by the woman who cut the cord, and the mother shows him the baby, pointing out any body characteristic which seems to her a manifest sign that the child is a reincarnation [211] of a deceased member of the family or other evidence that there has been some influence from the invisible world.

[203] The same woman informs the local authorities (dugu-tigi, nyana-n-son-na-ba, etc.) and the people in the vicinity; the news spreads rapidly.

846 The mother resumes her normal activities as soon as possible and is often on her feet within 24 hours. In any event, she never remains in bed for more than a week, unless it is absolutely impossible for her to get up. For seven or eight days, however, she remains in seclusion. Furthermore, particularly in Kaarta, her food is prepared exclusively by girl friends of her choice.

[751] The detachment of the umbilical cord marks the end of this period of seclusion. In Kaarta the cord is preserved and placed in a small bag which is tied around the baby's neck; later on it will be made into a precious talisman. It is only after the detachment of the cord that the child is considered to be definitely

844 Before delivery of her child, a woman is advised to pound grain. When the labor pains come, the woman retires to her hut with several matrons (men are not allowed access). If the child is poorly presented, the priest is called. He performs outside the hut, simulating the delivery and chanting the formulas that ease labor. To deliver the infant, the woman kneels with her hands thrown behind her, while the midwife supports the small of her back. At birth the infant's shoulders must touch the ground; this is the moment when he receives his spiritual principles. The infant is washed several times and smeared with karite butter.

846 The mother must not go out during the first eight days after the
853 birth; she must devote herself entirely to the new-born. She massages
854 his head daily in order to give it a more rounded form, and she pinches his nose. She nurses the infant for the first two years, then the weaned child passes directly to the communal calabash. Until the child can walk, the mother carries it astraddle on her back with the aid of a loincloth knotted at her chest. In this manner the infant accompanies the mother everywhere, to work as well as to the dance.
868 It is during these intimate contacts that the mother teaches her child to talk. Later, the little girls stay with their mothers who teach them all the domestic arts, while the boys are educated in outside work.
[867] During their childhook they are taught the usages and rules of deport-
201 ment: a woman knows she must never shake the hand of a man to
576 greet him, and, if he extends his hand, she flings up her arm "as a sign of not being interested." A man will salute his superior by extending his hand palm upwards, and the superior will put his over it; inversely, when a man greets an inferior he extends his hand with the palm down, while for an equal his hand will be perpendicular to the ground. If a man must ask someone's pardon, he puts his hands behind his back to simulate the tail of an animal (for he has acted like an animal). Crossing the hands in front of or upon the head is a sign of sadness. To mark his submission to a king, a man puts his right elbow to the ground. To pray to God, the two hands are extended with the palms turned [89] outward. A woman learns that it is im-
576 pudent to question her husband during the day, and when she speaks
593 of him, she says koke, that is, big brother, for she cannot pronounce
833 his name or in any way recall the bonds which exist between them. It is only during the two consecutive nights that she couples with him

843 291 One last discreet word about the pregnant women: Their loincloths, the cloth rags with which they gird their hips, are held in place by means of a cord, a common string knotted below the navel, a very unsightly thing, or sometimes by means of a colored cloth, a red handkerchief, for example, folded in a triangle.

842 789 A male child, is more highly valued than a girl, and to obtain this blessing the Bambara consult sorcerers and diviners and sacrifice to the boli fetishes. The women have great confidence in amulets, and they wear hung at the waist many dirty bags which form an ugly roll under the tafé, or loincloth (the knotted cord, tafo, is worn around the hips). Some wear their "boy bringer" where it can be seen; it is a square leather bag three fingers wide which contains medicine: bits of bark and wood, and sometimes a goat's horn which the woman slips between her thighs (1). /168/

1. This horn is also often worn in order that the child may have a perfect body, or so as not to have a premature delivery. Nicolay says that these talismans or magic objects, which are capable of changing the course of events and even of nature, are made and sold by sorcerers. /Fernand Nicolay, Curiosités des lois et coutumes. Histoire des croyances, superstitions, moeurs, usages et coutumes (selon le plan du Décalogue) /Curiosities among Laws and Customs. A History of Beliefs, Superstitions, Manners, Usages and Customs (according to the Outline of the Decalogue), Paris: V. Retaux, 1901./

844 Birth of a child. -- In Bambara country the "demon" usually takes part in the joys and sorrows of the family. However, I have

844 not discovered the slightest satanic rite in connection with the birth of a child; not a boli is brought out of its dirty hole.

The Bambara woman gives birth to her child kneeling on a mat with her hands behind her head or propped against the wall. The oldest woman present ties the umbilical cord and cuts it with a dull razor. The infant is washed and washed again, then liberally greased with karité butter (Bassia parkii) and, if possible, with butter. The section at the navel is seldom successful, and a large proportion of the Negroes suffer from birth from umbilical hernias. The child's head is also rubbed, and it is wrapped in a white cloth. This massage, called kounkolo d'la (1), is performed with the palm of the hand and ends

1. Kounkolo, "head"; d'la, "to arrange."

with a gentle blow of the thumb on the nose to turn it up a little.

When the delivery is over, the hut is tidied, and the woman who tied the cord goes out on the doorstep and calls the father, who is sitting in the court or in an entry hut with two or three close friends: "K'i ka na san, you can come now" (2). He comes in, and the wife,

2. If the father is away, the person who watches over the hut in his absence, a relative or close friend, is called.

who is sitting on her bed, shows him the newborn child and tells him its sex. Since her chief responsibility is to watch over this little one, to feed it, and preserve its life, she hastens to cover it so as not to be blamed some day for having been careless. One glance was enough for her to note the defects of this frail body. "Manoum, is it possible! Look," she says to her husband, "look at this leg, this arm, this back, this chest. Can he live with such an infirmity?" She enumerates all the physical defects, and if she sees a pimple, a beauty spot, or a slight blueness, it must be noted, for might it not be the mark of an elder, a deceased member of the family?

844 In the end comes a word of encouragement from the midwives
851 and the father: "A gnéna, that is good." The woman who tied /sic/ the umbilical cord runs to tell the head of the village, the dougoutigi, or /169/ gnéna-n-sonnaba, and the sotigi (if the civil and religious powers do not rest in one and the same head), and the members of his council, the gouatigi (or heads of families), that the village has one more inhabitant. To each and every one she tells the news of the newborn in a flood of words, she declares her fears or her hopes, and everyone greets her, thanks her, and makes her one of those wishes that go straight to the heart. She deserves these praises and can desire them, for she has done her duty. Besides, these are her only fees. A Bambara midwife does not get paid; she receives a present or is given a tip, so let us leave her her glory and not call her mercenary.

The child receives a name; his head is shaved. -- Two or
846 three days after her delivery before she has recovered, a Bambara woman begins to tend to her household duties. But she does not leave her hut at all; she sits on a mat, spins cotton, and smiles at her child or fondles it in her arms. And why does she not get a breath of air at least in her court? Could it be false modesty on her part? Not at all; she is proud to be a mother, but can she leave her darling for even a moment? It has no swaddling clothes or cradle; it can only cry, demand the breast, struggle and get into a position that is harmful to his frail body, and to go outdoors and visit the men friends who seem to ignore her since she became a mother (1),

> 1. Men do not enter the hut of a woman in confinement until after the tonsure and naming of the infant. The husband himself does not go in except when necessary.

she would have to leave it there alone, all by itself. Until the
[854] infant's navel dries, she cannot put the infant astride on her back, which is the only way she knows to carry him, and if she were to go out without her child, her milk would dry up and become full of substances harmful to the nursing infant.